

**Comments by Councilmember Howard Denis
On Pepco's Dismal Performance at October 1
Field Hearing in Kensington**

Pepco's performance after the storms of August and September was dismal. Thousands of citizens have expressed their dismay to me regarding Pepco's response to the power outages. During each of those storms, residents contacted me to relay stories of personal hardships.

Pepco was not fully prepared. Pepco admitted to problems in its call center, glitches with software used to track outage calls, and difficulties in managing out-of-town repair crews. It is clear that Pepco has not fully implemented the recommendations which followed the '99 ice storm. I spoke with former Councilmember Ike Leggett recently. Ike and the Maryland Public Service Commission led the probe in '99 and gave us the record that we are now using to help measure performance. There has been a deeply disappointing lack of progress.

- Outage reporting did not improve, and may have been worse.
- Coordination with other agencies, like the school system, was woefully inadequate.
- Information on power restoration was much too inaccurate
- The priority list was incomplete. Buildings with many disabled were not included.
- Customer communication did not improve.

With this in mind, I have serious concerns with Pepco's ability to respond in the event of a regional emergency. I have spoken to my colleagues on the Council and have found that others share this concern. We are determined to find out what went wrong and fix it. Efforts are underway to scrutinize Pepco's response and improve their future performance.

We have significant homeland security and regional concerns here. Not only we, but Maryland's Office of Homeland Security, the District's Emergency Management Agency, Virginia's Office of Public Safety, METRO, the Water and Sewer Authority, Dominion Power, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency all have a lot at stake here. We must repair any communications breakdown between PEPCO, Maryland and FEMA.

That's why I believe we need a Regional Power Summit in the Washington area, under the auspices of the Council of Governments, to make sure that we're all on the same page and that we're better prepared next time.

PEPCO bills have been arriving. And there will be stormy weather again. Customers are expected to pay their bills, no excuses. PEPCO, and government itself must also pay the price, no excuses, for the multi-million dollar clean-up and to make sure that we are better prepared in the future.